

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Belle Fourche School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2006-2007

Team Members: Linda Shirley, Team Leader; Barb Boltjes, Rita Pettigrew, Mary Borgman Education Specialists, Angie Boddicker, Special Education Programs and Dave Halverson, Transition Liaison.

Dates of On Site Visit: October 10 & 11, 2006

Date of Report: November 2, 2006

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Assistance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance.
Needs Intervention	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1- General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary **Data Sources used:**

B – District/Agency Instructional Staff Information
C – Suspension and Expulsion Information
D – Statewide Assessment Information
E – Enrollment Information
F – Placement Alternatives
G – Disabling Conditions
H – Exiting Information
Parent Survey, referrals, child find information
Comprehensive Plan

Meets Requirements

The steering committee reports the district's child find activities are implemented annually.

The district uses a TAT format at all levels (K-12). Teachers document past interventions on the TAT form if they have implemented them prior to convening a TAT. The district has implemented this system in its current form for two years. The addition of a full time school psychologist has been beneficial in helping teachers with implementing interventions prior to a referral.

The Belle Fourche School District's staff, at all levels (Elem., MS, HS), participated in data retreats to analyze information provided from the Dakota STEP. With information derived from these retreats, a school-wide school improvement plan was written with the intent to help students with disabilities. Professional development activities and curriculum implementation directly address the identified needs.

Validation Results

Promising practice:

The monitoring team found the following to be promising practices in the Belle Fourche School District.

Alternative School Calendar:

The Belle Fourche School District has adopted an alternative school calendar to meet the needs of the diverse students in the district. There are approximately 18 Fridays, in the 2006-07 school year, that are designated as Intersession days. School is not in session; however, students who need assistance in academic areas are referred to attend.

High School: Intersession includes assistance with homework, individual skill attainment and enrichment activities. Peer tutors also are available to assist with class work. In addition, homework nights are scheduled Tuesday-Thursday. Students are given assistance by certified staff members.

Middle School: Intersession is programmed in conjunction with a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant. Academic enrichment is available for students along with other activities. The Middle School also hosts an after school program with federal grant money.

Elementary: Intersession activities are taught by certified staff to help students learn basic skills. Students are referred by classroom teachers and parents are contacted by school staff.

These programs are open to all students in the district. The school furnishes transportation to all students in the district for intersession days.

School/Home Liaison Officer

The school district employs a School/Home Liaison Officer. The duties of the officer are to build positive connections between parents/students and schools. The officer sometimes serves as a social worker with families in crisis, helping find resources and programs to meet their needs. The Special Education Department calls on this officer as a direct link to the families when other means of communication are not available.

All Day Kindergarten Program

The school district uses their own resources to enhance the education of kindergarten students. There are five kindergarten teachers, and two of these teachers are certified special education teachers. There is one Para-educator at the school to assist with students. There are only 3 students pulled out for extended services. Through observation the kindergarten, classes were found to be fully integrated. Students participate in all small and large group activities. Social skills training are implemented with peers on the playground and classroom. Communication between the paraprofessional and classroom teachers about the students happens on a daily basis.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle One, General Supervision as meeting the requirements.

Out of Compliance: Needs Intervention

ARSD 24:05:17:03 Annual report of children served

The monitoring team was unable to validate correct placement on the child count for three students. What was reported on the SIMS net did not correlate with what was on the IEP cover sheets. Through validation on these student files, it was found that:

Student 36 is reported as a 505 on the child count, and the IEP cover sheet is marked as a 525.

Student 11 is reported as a 555; however the evaluation does not support eligibility.

Student 37 is reported as 505 on the child count, the IEP reports 560 and the MDT reports 555.

The business manager will be contacted and appropriate adjustments will be made to State Aid received for these students.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

1. Numbers of children screened
2. Preschool age
3. School-age
4. Age at referral
5. Student progress data
6. Personnel development information
7. Number of referrals that do not result in evaluation
8. District records of release to outside agencies
9. Needs assessment information
10. Personnel training
11. Budget information

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported the provision of a free appropriate public education for all children.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee reported a need to improve record management.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education as meeting the requirements. The monitoring team could not validate the Needs Improvement area listed above, the record management areas was not found out of compliance.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

G – Disabling Conditions
H- Exiting Information
I – Placement by Age
J – Placement by Disabling Condition
L – Complaints
M – Hearings
N – Monitoring

1. Teacher file reviews
 - Prior notice
 - Telephone log
 - Evaluation report
2. Exit and re-entry into special education
3. Number of placement committee overrides
4. Surveys
5. General curriculum information
6. Comprehensive plan
7. Initial referral log
8. Needs assessment information
9. Personnel training
10. Budget information
11. List of languages represented in the district (includes sign language and Braille)
12. List of interpreters/signers used in the district
13. Personnel with designated certification

Meets Requirement

File reviews revealed that prior to the pre-site review in Feb. 2006, parents were not being consistently brought into to the evaluation process. If the parents were contacted prior to the evaluation there was no documentation. Additionally, the administration and correct use of functional assessment were not being completed. In staff meetings/in-services, these two issues were discussed in length and all teachers are now in compliance with the procedures.

The current form that the district uses is in compliance with all the requirements listed except whether there is a severe discrepancy between achievement and ability which is not correctable without special education and related services.

In 24 of 26 files reviewed, written reports contained required content.

In four files reviewed, teachers indicated that the severe discrepancy between IQ and achievement was not documented. Three files indicated there was no observation of academic performance done for SLD students.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring agrees that the district uses a team of people including the referring person, special education teacher, school psychologist and related service providers to determine areas to be evaluated. . Parents receive copies of test results. Those results are explained to the parents and are used to develop the individual education program (IEP). Parent's participation into the evaluation process was documented in all files reviewed.

Out of Compliance: Needs Assistance

ARSD 24:05:30:04 Prior notice and parent consent

Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related services. Parental consent is not required before:

- (1) Reviewing existing data as part of an evaluation or reevaluation; or
- (2) Administering a test or other evaluation that is administered to all children unless, before administration of that test or evaluation, consent is required of parents of all children.

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, that evaluation procedures include the following:

- (7) The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, as applicable, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities;

The monitoring team found that transition evaluations were being completed, but there was no parent permission to administer the assessments. Written reports are not being generated on the transition assessment and given to the parents.

Needs Intervention:

ARSD 24:05:22:03. Certified child

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count. This definition applies to all eligible children ages 3 to 21, inclusive, and to only those children under the age of 3 who are in need of prolonged assistance.

The monitoring team identified the following issues:

Students 8 and 10 were reported as 555. An achievement and ability were completed. There were no other evaluations completed to support this disability.

Student 2 was reported as a 525; however the monitoring team was unable to find any evidence that showed an educational impact for this student. The student qualified with scores from achievement and ability, however there was no functional assessment completed, and no skill specific information reported. The only goal was "When given tests/quizzes when presented orally in all content area classes, ___ will demonstrate competency by achieving an 85% accuracy in 4 out of 4 trials for 18 consecutive weeks".

Student 15 was reported as 525 on the child count and 555 on the MDT. The evaluations do not support the eligibility for 525, and there were no evaluations completed to support the 555 disability, or how it impacts the education.

Students 17 and 13 are reported as 555 on the child count. Both are under the disability category for ADHD, however there were no behavior evaluations completed on either student to support the disability.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

L – Complaints

M – Hearings

1. Teacher file reviews
2. Surveys
3. Comprehensive plan
4. Parental rights document
5. Consent and prior notice forms
6. Needs assessment information
7. Public awareness information
8. Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure
9. Review of access logs
10. Personnel training
11. Budget information

Meets requirements

The steering committee stated parents were provided with the parent rights booklet in accordance with regulation 100% of the time. The steering committee noted parents have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought and a surrogate parent is appointed if no parent can be identified. Parents of children in need of special education and related services are afforded the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through the review of data tables and staff interviews, the monitoring team found the district has not had a due process hearing within the last six years. The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

K – Early Intervention (Part C) Exit Information
L – Complaints
M – Hearings
N – Monitoring
Comprehensive plan
Teacher file reviews
Student progress data
Personnel development information
Needs assessment information
Personnel training
Budget information

Meets requirements

The steering committee reports policies and procedures are in place to ensure an IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student. File reviews and parent surveys conclude that the district has appropriate team participation in all IEP meetings. Most IEP meetings, if convenient for parents, at the middle school are scheduled during teacher teaming times so that all of the student's teachers can participate and give input.

Out of compliance

The pre-site review revealed that annual goals needed to be written differently (measurable with criteria). In addition, the pre-site review revealed that our state generated IEP forms do not have a space to indicate who is responsible to carry out the goals. Writing of justification statements must use the accept/reject format

Student file reviews and the pre-site review in Feb. 2006 revealed that transition planning and documentation of transition evaluations on prior notice consent forms were not done consistently. Through training and staff meetings this is a much improved practice.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees an IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student. Teachers are made aware of all goals and modifications needed in the regular classroom.

Out of compliance: Needs Assistance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program

Each student's individualized education program shall include:

(1) A statement of the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including:

(a) How the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

(7) A statement of:

(a) How the student's progress toward the annual goals described in this section will be measured; and

(b) How the student's parents will be regularly informed (through such means as periodic report cards), at least as often as parents are informed of their non-disabled student's progress of:

(i) Their student's progress toward the annual goals; and

(ii) The extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the student to achieve the goals by the end of the year.

Through interview and a review of student records the monitoring team determined progress towards annual goals was not reported in all files at the high school level.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP) Present level of academic achievement and functional performance and annual goals

A student's IEP must contain present levels of academic achievement and functional performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process.

The monitoring team found student files lacked the required content in the PLAFFPs (i.e. specific skill area(s) affected by the student's disability, to include strengths and needs, along with how the disability affects the student's involvement in the general curriculum and parent input). File reviews indicated functional assessments are not being completed to acquire the skill-based information to develop present levels of performance for students eligible for special education services. Annual goals did not consistently specify skills the student could reasonably accomplish

within a 12 month period. For example, "Will improve her reading skills as measured by achieving a minimum of an 80% in all content area subjects". "Will read at the 6th grade level".

ARSD 24:05:27:01.02 Development, review and revision of the IEP- Consideration of Special Factors

In developing, reviewing, and revising each student's IEP, the team shall consider the strengths of the students and the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their student, the results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the students as appropriate, and the results of the student's performance on any general state or district-wide assessment program. The individualized education program team also shall: In the case of a student whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, consider, if appropriate, strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports, to address that behavior.

In several student files reviewed, behavioral assessment and/or present levels of performance contained information regarding the impact of student behavior on educational performance. However, in developing the IEPs for these students, the team checked "no," that the behavior does not impede learning and did not address strategies, including positive behavioral interventions and supports, to address the behaviors.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

B – Instructional Staff Information
E – Enrollment Information
F – Placement Alternatives
G – Disabling Conditions
I – Placement by Age
J – Placement by Disabling Condition
L – Complaints
M – Hearings
N – Monitoring

1. File reviews
2. Parent, Student, General educator surveys
3. General curriculum information
4. Age at placement
5. Needs assessment information
6. Personnel training
7. Budget information

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the school district provides procedures for determining placement options using the continuum of alternative placements. LRE considerations are applied to all students' birth through twenty one.

Validation Results**Meets Requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under least restrictive environment.